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The Sunnah of the Islamic Walima (Wedding Reception)

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

The Muslim bride and groom should conduct a Walima (wedding reception banquet) after consummating their marriage in order to announce their union to the public. The Islamic walimah is beneficial in that it prevents unnecessary suspicion or rumors from circulating among those people whom might see the newlyweds together and are unaware of the fact that they are truly a lawfully married couple. The evidence for this instruction is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Ali bin Husain narrated: "**Safiya bint Huyai came to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.), and when she returned (home), the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) accompanied her. It happened that two men from the Ansar passed by them and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) called them saying, 'She is**

(my wife) Safiyya!' Those two men said, 'Subhan Allah (May Allah forgive them; they did not suspect any lewdness)!' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Satan circulates in the human body as blood does.'" With this being said, conducting a walima serves as the ideal method for conveniently announcing a couple's marriage. The couple in question should therefore have a simple wedding banquet in which their family and friends are invited; even if they can only afford provide a small amount of foodstuff. The evidence for performing a walima with simple food is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Anas ibn Malik (RA) narrated: **"The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) saw a yellow mark on Abdur Rahman ibn Awf and said: 'What's this?' He replied: 'I have married a woman with the dowry being gold to the weight of a date-stone.' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: 'May Allah bless you (in your marriage), perform a Walima, even if it is only with a goat.'"**

The typical food dishes to serve at the walima:

It is important to note that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) actually performed a walima for some of his marriages with a sheep and some bread or with two Mudd (1/2 Sa'a or two scoops gathered with both hands cupped together) of grain. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Thabit narrated from Anas who reportedly said: **"I did not see the**

Prophet (P.B.U.H.) host a banquet for any of his wives as the walima done for Zainab Bint Jahsh (RA). He gave a banquet for her with one sheep." Bukhari also collected another hadith from Anas (RA) wherein he reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) provided a walima on the occasion of the consummation of his marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh. He provided meat and bread to the fill off his guests**." Further evidence for the food served at the walima of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) and his wives (RA) is found in another hadith in the collection of Bukhari that was narrated from Safiya Bint Shaiba which reads: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) gave a banquet for some of his wives with two Mudd of barley**." Furthermore, it is also narrated in a hadith from Abu Dawud that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) also offered Hays (a type of sweat-dish cooked with dates, cheese & butter) on the occasion of his marriage with Safiyya (RA). The hadith in question that was narrated on the authority of Anas reads as follows: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) stayed for three days at a place between Khaibar and Medina, and there he consummated his marriage with Safiyya bint Huyay (RA). I invited the Muslims to a banquet which included neither meat nor bread. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) ordered for the leather dining sheets to be spread, and then dates, dried yogurt and butter were provided over it, and that was the Walima (banquet) of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.). The Muslims asked whether Safiyya would be considered as his wife or**

as a slave girl of what his right hands possessed. Then they said, 'If the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) screens her from the people, then she is the Messenger of Allah's (P.B.U.H.) wife, but if he does not screen her, then she is a slave girl.' So when the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) proceeded, he made a place for her (on the camel) behind him and screened her from the people.'"

The ideal time for conducting the walima:

The actual walima can either occur at the time of the marriage contract when the marriage becomes valid, after the wedding and prior to consummating the marriage, or after consummating the actual marriage. However, the majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the ideal time for conducting the walima is after the marriage has been consummated. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Anas ibn Malik (RA) narrated: **"I was a boy of ten when the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) migrated to Medina. My mother and aunts used to urge me to serve the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) regularly, thus I served him for ten years. When the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) passed away, I was twenty years old, and I knew about the order of Hijab more than anyone else, when it was revealed. It was revealed for the first time when the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) had consummated his marriage with Zainab bint Jahsh (RA). The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) in the morning was a bridegroom,**

and he invited the people to a banquet (walima). So they came, ate, and then all left except a few who remained with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) for a long time..."

It is also important to note that the actual walima should not be held for more than two consecutive days, in order to comply with the sunnah of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.). This fact is evident from the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Zubayr ibn Uthman reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'The wedding feast on the first day is a duty, that on the second is a good practice, but that on the third day is to make men hear of it and show it to them. Qatadah said: 'A man told me that Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab was invited (to a wedding feast on the first day and he accepted it. He was again invited on the second day, and he accepted. When he was invited on the third day, he did not accept; he said: They are the people who make men hear of it and show off to them.'**" However, some scholars maintain that if there is a genuine need to delay the walima, such as not being able to invite everyone on the first day or two, there is no harm in inviting people on those days which are more convenient.

Who should be invited to the walima:

While on the subject of showing off with regard to the walima, it is extremely distasteful to only invite rich people or those from the upper-class of the society. One's relatives

and friends, regardless of their educational level or social status should be invited. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Huraira (RA) reported a directive which he heard from the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) who allegedly said: **"The worst food is that of a wedding banquet (walima) to which only the rich are invited while the poor are not invited. And he who refuses an invitation (to a banquet) disobeys Allah and His Messenger (P.B.U.H.)."** With this being said, it is therefore recommended that the married couple invite their neighbors, relatives, friends, associates, scholars, and pious people. Furthermore, it is strongly encouraged that all invited parties honor the invitation of the couple and attend their walima. This fact is evident from the Hadith of Bukhari wherein Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) reportedly said: **"The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'If one of you is invited to a wedding banquet (walima), then he must accept the invitation.'"** What is more, a hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim that was narrated by Nafil (RA) reports: **"I heard Abdullah ibn Umar (RA) narrating that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Accept the feast when you are invited to it.' Thus, Abdullah ibn Umar used to come to the feast, whether it was a wedding feast or other than that, and he would come there even in the state of fasting (attend the walima even if you do not plan to eat or drink anything).'"** Lastly, a hadith from Imam Muslim that was narrated by Abu Hurayra (RA)

reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'If one of you is invited to a Walima, let him accept. If he is fasting, let him pray (make duah)...'**" Therefore, in light of the above mentioned narrations, many scholars regard the acceptance of a walima invitation to be binding; and one will be deemed sinful for refusing to attend.

The basic structure of the walima:

The walima should be conducted in the simplest manner possible. This fact is evident from the report of Bayhaqi wherein Aisha (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: "**The most blessed marriage (nikah) is the one with the least expenses**." Furthermore, the Quran provides the strongest evidence on this issue when it says in Surah Al-Furqan (25:67) which reads: "**Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)**." In essence, the simpler the structure of the walima, the better it is in the eyes of Allah; because, the objective is to offer foodstuff the guests as a sincere gesture of appreciation for their attendance.

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